

Proposed State Actions in Baltimore City Public Schools, March 2006

Executive Summary

What is the State Board considering?

At its March 2006 meeting, the State Board of Education will consider a proposal from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to direct Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPSS) to:

- **Take Systemic Corrective Actions**—actions that will improve the school system's overall ability to educate children.
- **Institute Tiered Requirements for Schools in Restructuring**—a set of actions that increase in intensity according to a school's performance and the length of time it has been identified for school improvement.
- **Revise the school system's Master Plan.**

Why does MSDE want to take action in Baltimore City schools ?

MSDE developed its proposal in response to severe, persistent deficiencies in student achievement in BCPSS. To date there are 54 Baltimore City schools in restructuring implementation—the most extreme end of the state's school improvement process—with nine more in the restructuring planning process. These schools are not progressing—or are not progressing quickly enough—even as standards rise for students: The freshman class of 2005 is required to pass the Maryland High School Assessments (HSA) to earn a diploma.

Of the City's 10 high schools in restructuring, two have been identified by the state as low-performing since 1994, one since 1996, and one since 1997. After 12 years, achievement in four of those schools remains extremely low. On average in these schools, students are absent 36 days per year, and with rare exception, 80-90% of them have failed the High School Assessments. For these students, there is no more time to wait for improvement to occur. The BCPSS middle schools similarly are in crisis.

Hasn't the State Board already issued Corrective Actions for BCPSS?

Yes. The whole Baltimore City School System has been a "System in Corrective Action" since July 2003, when the State Board mandated six corrective actions, of which only one was implemented. Student achievement across the whole system remains the lowest in the State.

Is the proposal before the State Board a disciplinary or punitive action?

No. The directives contained in the proposal are not disciplinary or punitive. The BCPSS has made some good-faith efforts to improve its schools. However, data show that the schools are not making enough progress. According to Maryland and federal law, when a school system is not making adequate progress, the State is not only authorized to act, it is obligated to do so.

The proposed actions are intended to help the Baltimore City Public School System's students to progress and achieve.

2006 Systemic Corrective Actions for Baltimore City Public School System

The proposed Systemic Corrective Actions are targeted to five areas: Instruction, Leadership, School Safety, Low-Performing Schools, and High School Graduation and Student Support. These actions would be taken by the Baltimore City Public School System.

Instruction

- ✓ Adopt new middle and high school curricula that have been used successfully in another Maryland school system.
- ✓ Hire an independent evaluator to monitor the implementation of the Master Plan.

Leadership

- ✓ Evaluate and, as necessary, replace the school system's Area Academic Officers.
- ✓ The Area Academic Officers will work with MSDE to customize leadership training for the schools' leadership.

School Safety

- ✓ Develop training for school staffs on improving school safety. The training must be developed in partnership with Sheppard Pratt Health Systems, Johns Hopkins Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence, or a comparable entity.
- ✓ Identify students with chronic, severe, and escalating misbehavior, and put in place a case management system for them.

Low-performing Schools Management Structure

- ✓ Hire two full-time school improvement specialists who will report to MSDE and whose written job descriptions will establish that they have the authority to oversee schools in restructuring.

High School Graduation and Student Support

- ✓ Develop Student Support Plans at a minimum for all high school students for whom passing the High School Assessments is a graduation requirement and who have failed or are at risk of failing a High School Assessment.

2006 Tiered Requirements for Baltimore City Schools in Restructuring Implementation

These proposed new requirements increase in intensity according to a school's performance and the length of time it has been identified for school improvement.

1. **Seven schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2005.** There are no additional actions required of these schools.

No additional requirements.

2. **Nineteen schools have been in improvement since 1998 or later, did not make AYP in 2005, but are improving.** There are no additional actions required of these schools.

No additional requirements.

3. **Three schools did not make Adequate Yearly Progress in the Special Education subgroup only.** They have one new requirement: their Restructuring Implementation Specialist must hold MSDE certification in Special Education and be highly qualified as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act.

One new requirement:
Restructuring Implementation Specialist must hold MSDE certification in Special Education and be Highly Qualified.

4. **Six high schools are Derivative High Schools**—new, smaller high schools created by the breakup of large neighborhood High Schools in Improvement under the implementation of the Baltimore City High School Blue Print Reform Model. There are no additional actions required of these schools, but they will be closely monitored by MSDE as a clearer picture of their student achievement emerges.

No additional requirements.
MSDE will closely monitor achievement.

5. **Eight schools have been in School Improvement at least since 1997, and have made little to no improvement in mathematics.** They have one new requirement: their Restructuring Implementation Specialist must hold MSDE certification in mathematics and be highly qualified as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act.

One new requirement:
Restructuring Implementation Specialist must hold MSDE certification in mathematics and be Highly Qualified.

6. **Seven middle schools have been in school improvement since at least 1997, and their achievement is very low, declining, or erratic.** The Baltimore City Public School System has the choice of engaging a third party to manage the school or re-opening the school as a public charter school, with the new management beginning the 2007-2008 school year. The seven schools are: Calverton, Chinquapin, Diggs-Johnson, Hamilton, Thurgood Marshall, William H. Lemmel, and Dr. Roland N. Patterson. (Roland Patterson Middle may close, as the system plans to propose its closing to the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners.)

Required for these schools:
Engage a third party to manage the schools or become a public charter school.
(School system's choice)

7. **Four high schools—Frederick Douglass, Northwestern, Patterson, and Southwestern—have been in improvement since at least 1997 and have the most serious challenges.** MSDE will begin the process to engage third parties to assume management of the schools beginning the 2007-2008 school year. (Southwestern may close, as the system plans to propose its closing to the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners.)

Required for these schools:
MSDE will engage a third party to manage the schools.

Master Plan Annual Update Resubmission

In exchange for increased, flexible funding for public schools, the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act requires all Maryland school systems to submit to the Maryland State Board of Education a Master Plan that details how the school system will improve the achievement of all students and close achievement gaps. The Act also requires school systems to submit each year a Master Plan Annual Update. An independent Review Panel thoroughly reviews these plans and submits recommendations to the State Superintendent, who shares the plans and her recommendations with the State Board. The State Board ultimately decides whether to approve a school system's Master Plan and/or Annual Update.

Baltimore City Public School System has an approved Master Plan. However, its 2005 Annual Update has yet to be approved. Following a thorough review of the school system's October 2005 submission, the State Board voted in December 2005 not to approve it. BCPSS was directed to revise and resubmit the Annual Update. In March, BCPSS revised and resubmitted its plan, and an independent Review Panel thoroughly reviewed it.

After analyzing the resubmission, the Review Panel remarked upon the extraordinary amount of work on the part of BCPSS. The resubmitted Annual Update addressed most of the areas of concern noted on the first submission, and it was better organized. The Review Panel also commended BCPSS for its careful analysis of the situation. In its plan, BCPSS proposed an ambitious set of actions and strategies to improve achievement across the school system. In fact, these actions and strategies were so ambitious that they exceed the school system's capacity, rendering the resubmission unrealistic and impractical. **Although bold actions are required, actions beyond the capacity of BCPSS to implement will only lead to more situations where actions and strategies are not implemented. Based on its findings, the Review Panel could not recommend approval of the resubmission.**

The Review Panel recommended the State Board take the following actions:

1. The resubmitted 2005 Master Plan Update is not approved.
2. The Baltimore City Public School System is directed to submit a new Master Plan in October 2006 that covers school years 2006–2007 and 2007–2008, and that addresses the findings in the Review Panel's report.
3. Baltimore City is directed to take interim actions to address the urgent findings in this report. These interim actions will take form in the Baltimore City Corrective Actions currently before the State Board.

For more information...

- ✓ Visit the Maryland State Department of Education Web site: www.marylandpublicschools.org.
- ✓ The full proposal considered by the State Board is available at http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/schools_improvement/.